

Intellectuals and Survival in 21st-Century Apocalyptic and Post-Apocalyptic Narratives

Research Thesis

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1. Introduction

In 2011, Jurassic London published *Pandemonium: Stories of the Apocalypse*. This limited-edition anthology focusing on tales of chaos and destruction was set to coincide with the London Tate's exhibition *John Martin: Apocalypse*, which ran from September 2011 through January 2012. While the contents of the Tate exhibit showcased the destructive theme of John Martin's paintings, the stories in *Pandemonium* were created by various authors to put a new spin on Martin's apocalyptic vision. Examples include looking at the apocalyptic narrative through humor or social media, while still highlighting the end-of-days. One story in particular, Lauren Beukes's "Chislehurst Messiah," contains many issues crucial to the representation of post-apocalyptic societies: selecting leadership, socializing with strangers, and exchanging knowledge freely among peers. These issues lay at the heart of political activity and become extremely important in the post-apocalyptic world when survival is at stake. For this reason, an analysis of "Chislehurst Messiah" provides an excellent introduction to how individuals can work to promote apocalyptic values and morals, which should enable others to survive.

Set in the London suburb to which the title alludes, "Chislehurst Messiah" begins by explaining that the protagonist, Simon, has been desensitized by the visions of apocalypse that surround him. The Event¹ caused him to witness seas of blood, dead bodies, and even his wife's slow and agonizing death. Simon is not deterred by the graphic signs that exist all around him that indicate that the world has changed. Scavenging the neighboring, and now abandoned, residences around his apartment, he tries to maintain a certain quality of life. And as he works toward his survival, he struggles in a particular aspect that Antonio Gramsci would say is

¹ ¹ *The Event*: the generic term used in this paper to signify the apocalyptic events of various narratives.

essential for humanity: helping others. While, he initially sets himself apart from those who have survived the apocalyptic condition, but he ultimately attempts to organize and lead the survivors.

Simon spends the first portion of the apocalypse physically and mentally isolated from other survivors. The third person, yet all knowing, narrator reveals that Simon has hidden away inside his apartment. He finds and collects foods and drinks, which he uses for sustenance. Simon is able to piece together that whatever catastrophe has happened seems to have killed mostly adults, “Feverishly, he clicked on clip after clip, desperate to find someone—anyone—who looked like his sort of person. His age. His type. Nothing” (Beukes 77). The trending phase on the many YouTube videos—one of the only forms of media that remain—is “The yoof shall inherit the earth” (76). *Yoof*, in this case, simply means *youth*; Simon is left in a world filled with the young. He separates himself physically from other survivors by refraining from personal contact or communication with anyone else. “He just needed to outlast the hoodie scum running rampant in the streets” (74). Simon is mentally separating himself from the other survivors on a criteria based solely on age, until he is forced onto the street after his apartment catches fire.

Now happy to make contact with those on the streets, the Chislehurst Messiah, as he calls himself, does indeed reach out to the youths left on Earth. He stumbles through the ruins of town until he finds what he is looking for. “...then he saw the first one: a black kid wearing an ill-fitting Armani suit and smoking a cigar, leaning up against the bonnet of a black BMW parked at an angle and blocking the street” (Beukes 80). It is this young mind and others like him that Simon thinks he will lead. Their lack of knowledge is the perfect in for this potential leader. “His people. His heart went out to them. He thought about how they would look back on this moment, tell the story over and over again. All part of his legend. The Coming of Simon” (80). As Simon approaches the child, a girl appears nearby. Talking to both of them now, Simon says,

“I’m here to save you,” before attempting to reassure them: “I know this is going to be hard for you to understand. But I need you to trust me. I’m the Messiah” (81). The children he finds do not want him to help. Possibly sensing his motives, the youths that he encounters immediately reject him. Ultimately they take their rejection one step further; a young girl shoots Simon and kills him.

This post-apocalyptic narrative, as short as it is, allows for many questions to be asked: what qualifies an individual to lead, how can individuals work towards fulfilling needs, and whose needs are being fulfilled? By looking at a variety of graphic novels, traditional novels, films, and short stories, one might conclude that the biggest issues in our society’s speculative future deal solely with human interaction: in a world emerging from the ashes of the establishments and institutions that had guided western society for hundreds—if not thousands—of years, a post-apocalyptic society would need individuals willing and able to guide humanity toward the conditions that they believe will enable survival. What characteristics would such an individual have? What would it take for a group of survivors to invest their future in a single leader?

Regardless of the role of leaders in apocalyptic narratives, the genre has shifted within the last quarter century. The genre, according to Andrew Darlington, “saw the atomic threshold as a survival game” (19). A game that Darlington believes had been won by the West in the early ‘90s. The apocalyptic narratives of the 21st-century are less influenced by this type of external threat than they are by political issues. Looking at the events leading into the 21st century give insights into the kind of leadership crisis present in today’s apocalyptic narratives. “I did not have sexual relations with that woman,” President Bill Clinton told the American public in the beginning of 1998. “These allegations are false.” These words, not the allegations, were false.

This statement: a catalyst for distrust and uneasiness among the American people. Just one day after his announcement, “the growing consensus in Washington,” according to *The Business Times*, “is that President Clinton is gradually losing all public and congressional support” (“Will”). *The Vancouver Sun*’s Barbara Yaffe put it bluntly that Clinton had “lost the trust of his community.” Shortly after Clinton’s comments, the world was struck with a fanatical fear of the new millennium. “By now,” Gene Weingarten wrote just months before the New Year, “everyone knows that on Jan. 1, 2000, something dreadful will happen on a global scale,” with which Weingarten followed: “This is no empty scare.” However unfounded, this fear gave way to new, relevant media in which Anglo-Americans could consume. *Survivor*, the hit reality TV show, grouped contestants into tribes and situations where they must compete against an opposing group. After the first episode aired in 2000, Bill Carter, of the *New York Times*, wrote that the show was an “experiment in mixing ‘Lord of the Flies’ with ‘Gilligan’s Island’ and ‘Treasure Island’ (C1). Additionally, Carter points out that “a surprising number of young viewers” were drawn to the survivalist show (C1). Alliances and trust, important ingredients in the quest for “survival,” were used strategically by almost all contestants and, indeed, made the tense situations of the show more bearable for those involved.

The audience, tuned in and focused on competitive reality, would get no break from competition during the first year of the new millennium. In the commercial breaks between clips of *Survivor*, viewers would continually be reminded of the upcoming presidential election between George W. Bush and Al Gore. Smear campaigns aired against both in an attempt to discredit either side, ending with the opposing candidate declaring, “I approve this message.” The election was not clear cut. In fact, there was no winner on the 8th of November, the day when the election results were expected to be announced. Uncertainty filled the air: “With

neither nominee within reach of a big popular majority, and the polls suggesting a close electoral contest as well, how would the winner lead?” (Apple B2). Finally, on December 12th, the election came to an end; George W. Bush was declared the president-elect.

The political unnerve caused by the Clinton scandal would mix with the 2000 Presidential election—an election called “traumatic” by the *New York Times* (Clines A1) and “a bizarre, bewildering beast” by *The Las Angeles Sentinel* (Conyers A7)—to plunge Anglo-American countries into a leadership crisis still present today. Bush’s approval rating plummeted throughout his presidency. Despite a handful of events (9/11, the beginning of the Iraq War, and the capture of Saddam Hussein) that boosted his support, Bush’s ended his last term in office with about 34% approval (“Historical”). President Obama, currently in the third year of his second term, has an approval rating that is coasting in the upper-40 percent. This is not isolated to United States. Tony Blair, the British Prime Minister from 1997-2007, left office with an approval rating in the mid 20% (“Tony”). His successor, Gordon Brown, faired only slightly worse with an approval rating in the low 20% (Grice). The current Prime Minister, David Cameron, like Obama, has a steady approval rating in the 40s (Boffey).

Political distrust is not a new concept in American history. Richard Hofstadter highlights this in his 1964 article “The Paranoid Style in American Politics.” Beginning in the early years of the new nation, American citizens have continually displayed, what Hofstadter called, the “paranoid style,” which is a “heated exaggeration, suspiciousness, and conspiratorial fantasy” aimed at the political leadership and is “an old and recurrent phenomenon” (77). Interestingly enough, Hofstadter comments that the “paranoid style” often coincides with apocalyptic mindsets. Hofstadter, referring to the “paranoid style” directed at Masons in the early-nineteenth century, describes the aggression at the time as being based off of an “apocalyptic and

absolutistic framework” (79). He later generalizes those who demonstrate the “paranoid style” as “see[ing] the fate of conspiracy in apocalyptic terms—he traffics in the birth and death of whole worlds, whole political orders, whole systems of human values” (83). While this sort of style has been present for decades, it has recently grown, and the last two decades have brought up many fears about our political leadership. A culture—one particular to the 21st century—has been created where leaders are not looked upon as leaders, but instead as social inhibitors. These concerns, however grave, have circulated throughout the collective unconscious of Anglo-American societies over the last two decades and have been reproduced in various texts, which contribute to a trend in the production of apocalyptic narratives.

Speculative fiction is a window into our very future; through it we can see the maturation and fruition of ideas, policies, and conflicts that began even before our own time. While apocalyptic narratives might separate our present from our future, the same struggles and demands in the speculative future can impact and even direct our actions in the present by shining a light on areas where western societies seems to be unraveling at the seams. Katherine Snyder argues that “dystopian speculative fiction takes what already exists and makes an imaginative leap into the future, following current socio-cultural, political, or scientific developments to their potentially devastating conclusions” (470). Taking Snyder’s claim, this thesis will investigate the “potentially devastating” leadership crises of 21st-Century apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic narratives. And one common element in nearly all modern apocalyptic narratives that deals with the leadership in said texts is the presence of what Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci called *intellectuals*. Traditional intellectuals, those educated with a prestigious social role; organic intellectuals, who are grown out of their own social group; and non-

functional intellectuals, someone with intellectual faculties that does not *function* as an intellectual in society; all have a role in the post-apocalyptic world.

This paper is organized by first explaining the theories used to analyze various narratives followed by those analyses. The second section gives the theoretical approaches, developed by Antonio Gramsci, used to examine apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic narratives in this paper. The function of intellectuals is a key point used throughout, and, still more importantly, the functions of traditional intellectuals and organic intellectuals are separated and broken down. The third section focuses on the role of the traditional intellectual in Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake* (2003). The fourth section is used in juxtaposition to the third and focuses on the role of an organic intellectual, through the example of Joe Schreiber's *Star Wars: Death Troopers* (2009). The fifth section shows the dangers associated with the leadership of a non-functioning intellectual in *Shaun of the Dead* (2005). All three of these examples look at an individual—a leader—and how he or she works toward survival and attempts to mitigate the conflicting ideologies present in apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic narratives. The conclusion of this paper offers potential answers to the questions posed in this introduction about Simon in “Chislehurst Messiah.” It also attempts to place the contemporary apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic works into the genre as a whole.

2. Gramscian Thoughts on Intellectuals

To examine depictions of leadership in apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic narratives, it is important to have a sound theoretical approach. I have chosen to focus my analysis through the lens of the work of Marxist theorist Antonio Gramsci. Gramsci wrote extensively about social and political issues, which becomes useful when discussing how survivors interact, because, “all action,” according to him, “is political” (326). And while Gramsci touches on numerous topics within the political realm, some of his most important ideas for my purposes here deal with individuals who lead, educate, direct, and guide social groups; these individuals are classified by Gramsci as intellectuals.

What are the “maximum” limits of acceptance of the term “intellectual”? Can one find a unitary criterion to characterise equally all the diverse and disparate activities of intellectuals and to distinguish these at the same time and in an essential way from the activities of other social groupings? The most widespread error of method seems to me that of having looked for this criterion of distinction in the intrinsic nature of intellectual activities, rather than in ensemble of the system of relations in which these activities (and therefore the intellectual groups who personify them) have their place within the general complex of social relations. (Gramsci 8)

To Gramsci, then, there was no single criterion required in order to determine *if* an individual was an intellectual. Rather, Gramsci determined that the only consideration that need be made is *how* an individual functions while socializing with his or her fellow men: “All men are intellectuals ... but not all men have in society the function of intellectuals” (9). While it is clear that everyone is an intellectual (through their mental faculties alone), but not everyone functions as an intellectual (through their socialization), and as Gramsci states, the function “is

directive and organisational, i.e. educative, i.e. intellectual” (16). The function of the intellectual is simple: educating, organizing, and directing. In his monograph *Gramsci's Political Thought*, Joseph Femia explains that intellectuals function in society as promoters of “social stability and change; it is they who sustain, modify, and alter the modes of thinking and behaviour of the masses” (130). They are those who guide a society, made of multiple classes and social groups, towards a set of beliefs that constitutes a worldview.

Another way to look at Gramsci's ideas regarding intellectuals, is through their ability to work within “a particular conception of the world,” or an ideology (9). French philosopher Louis Althusser explains ideology as “the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence” (153). This imaginary relationship is made possible through the act of interpellation, which is the process ideology uses to spread. Althusser explains interpellation as a “sequence”, or a twofold process: “I shall then suggest that ideology ‘acts’ or ‘functions’ in such a way that it ‘recruits’ subjects among the individuals (it recruits them all), or ‘transforms’ the individuals into subjects (it transforms them all) by that very precise operation which I have called *interpellation* or hailing” (162-63). First, ideology calls out to subjects; and, second, the subjects realize they are being called too, thus completing the process. Additionally, Althusser emphasizes the extensiveness and inescapability of any given ideology: “ideology has always-already interpellated individuals as subjects, which amounts to making it clear that individuals are always-already interpellated by ideology as subjects” (164). Althusser's ideas on ideology become extremely important when looking at intellectual because of the power of ideology to guide the actions of intellectuals, which are, in fact, promoting a particular ideology.

In exploring Gramsci's ideas regarding intellectual capacity versus functioning as an intellectual in society, it is clear that, just as in society as a whole, any character in a work of

fiction is also bound to his or her actions and is then able to function as an intellectual within the confines of the fictional narrative. This, however, does not guarantee that a functioning intellectual will be present in any specific work of apocalyptic fiction. “When one distinguishes between intellectuals and non-intellectuals, one is referring in reality only to the immediate social function” (Gramsci 9). The ability to educate, organize, and direct is what separates the intellectuals from the non-functioning intellectuals. With this in mind, and by employing Gramsci’s theory of intellectuals as a tool to investigate apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic narratives, any character in a work of fiction should have intellect; however, not every character would function as an intellectual in relation to other characters in said work. Whether or not characters are intellectuals would require them to be distinct in their ability to communicate and interact with those around them, and their interactions enable them to aid other characters by educating, organizing, and directing. In his *Prison Notebooks*, Gramsci distinguishes between two manifestations of intellectuals: the traditional and the organic.

Using deductive reasoning, three possibilities present themselves regarding individuals (characters) and their role as intellectuals, the first of which is that the individual has an intellectual capacity and functions in society as a traditional intellectual. In fiction it is also the case, as in our own world, that traditional intellectuals are more common than organic intellectuals. Traditional intellectuals are endowed with their social role through higher powers, more specifically, those that control social hegemony: the dominant group or class. The traditional intellectuals, if anything, inhibit social development by constraining the masses. Instead of encouraging a particular social group’s function, they only encourage what will benefit the dominant social group. They are “the man of letters, the philosopher, the artist”; in other words, they are the intellectuals who are traditionally educated and placed in a position

above those who do not share their education (Gramsci 9). The traditional intellectuals, according to Gramsci, are in a position above others, and he describes them as “the dominant group’s ‘deputies’ exercising the subaltern functions of social hegemony” (12). They enact the will and desires of those who hold power. Another key characteristic of traditional intellectuals, according to Gramsci, is that they do not recognize that they are acting in the role of the dominant group’s agent in instructing others how to act. This inability to notice their own role in the grand scheme of events makes the traditional intellectuals *believe* they are autonomous actors in society, when really they are just another piece of the puzzle. They “think of themselves as ‘independent’, autonomous, endowed with a character of their own, etc.” (8); they think that they are above or outside of the control of the dominant group, but in fact they are well within it and are active tools that that group uses to maintain control. Additionally, traditional intellectuals also separate themselves from those that they guide, a required action in order for them to feel endowed and higher on the social ladder than the masses.

The second possible out of the three is that the individual has an intellectual capacity and functions in society as an organic intellectual. Least common of all, and just as hard to identify in our own world, is the organic intellectual, built out of the necessities of her or his own group. This type of intellectual may be hard to distinguish from individuals who just have intellectual capacity because the organic intellectuals do not have their abilities to represent their group bestowed upon them by a high power. Rather, their own knowledge of their group enables them to guide from within. The other type of intellectual explained by Gramsci is the organic intellectual. While still acting as an educator, organizer, and guide, the organic intellectual acts in a profoundly different way than the traditional intellectual. Gramsci explains that an organic intellectual is grown out of the creation of his or her social group: “Every social group, coming

into existence ... creates together with itself, organically, one or more strata of intellectuals which give it homogeneity and an awareness of its own function not only in the economic but also in the social and political fields” (5). The organic intellectuals are created in unison with their social group, not educated by a preexisting ideology.² Their creation is their interpellation in a new ideology. Unlike traditional intellectuals, organic intellectuals understand their role within their group. They do not believe they are independent actors, but rather useful tools in their group’s activities and beliefs. They are able to promote historical development by being active participants within their social group and realizing that their group has its own needs separate from that of the dominant group. They see the commonality among members of their group; in fact, it is those commonalities that enable them to unite and find the needs shared among members of their community. Unlike the traditional intellectuals, organic intellectuals have an awareness of self that leads them to organize among their own kind.

Finally, the third possibility is that the individual has an intellectual capacity exhibited through his or her muscular labor yet does not function in society as an intellectual. These are those who exhibit intellectual capabilities to go about their everyday life, but they are not capable to functioning as an intellectual. And the only reason that every individual is called an intellectual by Gramsci is because “There is no human activity from which every form of intellectual participation can be excluded: *homo faber* cannot be separated from *homo sapiens*” (9). With any work of fiction, just like in our own world, it is far more likely that individuals do not function as an intellectuals in society. Intellectuals are rare, after all. This is made clear by their ability to guide social groups. If everyone functioned as an intellectual, there would be no

² Gramsci mentions again in a later section that organic intellectuals are created with their social group: “It can be observed that the ‘organic’ intellectuals which every new class creates alongside itself and elaborates in the course of its development, are for the most part ‘specialisations’ of partial aspects of the primitive activity of the new social type which the new class has brought into prominence” (6).

need for intellectuals to provide guidance; no one would need to be guided, as they, in fact, would be guiding themselves.

The way in which intellectuals interact with the masses can either drive social development, to the extent that the intellectuals take an active part in their social group, or limit the possible change of a social group, to the extent that the intellectuals set themselves apart from both the masses and the dominant group. Gramsci explains that, quite simply, humanity is communal; individuality, to Gramsci, does nothing to benefit humanity collectively. Separating oneself from others does nothing to develop society; instead the isolation of the individual drives social conflict.

That ethical ‘improvement’ is purely individual is an illusion and an error: the synthesis of the elements constituting individuality is ‘individual’, but it cannot be realized and developed without an activity directed outward, modifying external relations both with nature and, in varying degrees, with other men, in the various social circles in which one lives, up to the greatest relationship of all, which embraces the whole human species.

(Gramsci 360)

By pointing out that human individuality does not, in fact, advance human interactions, Gramsci is expressing his belief that humans must first and foremost attain meaningful and personal growth. This can be done by giving up the comparative notion that one—namely the individual—is better than any others—the community. If not through individuality, then, how can one enable progress among one’s community? Gramsci argues that “For this reason one can say that man is essentially ‘political’ since it is through the activity of transforming and consciously directing other men that man realizes his ‘humanity’, his ‘human nature’” (360). Humanity is not constant; rather it is always evolving, progressing, and reshaping, and it is the

political interactions between humans that encourages development. Without this historical change, humanity would not be. The traditional intellectuals, if anything, inhibit growth by constraining the masses or limit growth by only implementing changes approved of by the dominant group; instead of encouraging a particular social group's function, they only encourage what will benefit the dominant group. The organic intellectuals, on the other hand, are able to promote historic development by being active participant, through "homogeneity," and realizing that their social group has its own needs.

Social groups will disintegrate over time, much like a rock erodes as water continually runs over it. Gramsci claims that intellectuals can be a bridge between social groups which are separated over time. The information that intellectuals carry with them through time enables a continuance of norms and values no longer required to benefit production; the intellectuals change how more recent social groups function by giving them previously held beliefs and practices, while those beliefs may no longer be useful, not even to the dominant group from which they originated. Gramsci explains that with historical development new social groups will find "categories of intellectuals already in existence and which [seem] indeed to represent an historical continuity uninterrupted even by the most complicated and radical changes in ... social form" (6-7). In linking historical continuity to the presence of intellectuals, Gramsci is showing that while new social groups will form, they will find the ideological remnants (in the form of practices, beliefs, norms, and values) of an older, once dominant group; and even while that group no longer holds power, their traditional intellectuals will still be working to promote the conditions that were favored in the past.

This temporal struggle is one that seems to be present in many apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic narratives. In most apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic narratives, the social order,

whatever it is, is mostly, if not entirely, dissolved by many factors present in the apocalypse: mass death, lack of communication, economic failure, and the need for local rather than global survival. One person may take on the form of a traditional intellectual representing the once-dominant society by insisting that other survivors continue to perform in a way that would have been beneficial to the pre-apocalyptic society or government. Organic intellectuals, however, do not care about what was needed to succeed in the pre-apocalyptic society; to them, those notions were dissolved during the Event. While it is possible that characters that function as intellectuals are present in all works of fiction, this paper will look for those types of intellectuals in works of speculative fiction, that is science fiction, fantasy, and horror, with an emphasis on apocalyptic and post-apocalyptic settings. This is because these stories often coincide with the restarting of a society. Those that lead survivors out of the chaos will, ideally, be intellectuals. It is also in these types of narratives that audiences see how new social groups can create their own intellectuals and their own values, which the organic intellectuals must fight for or work towards. There are, however, also traditional intellectuals in these narratives, and, fittingly, they seem to promote past ideas and values from before the Event that caused the apocalypse for any specific work. And, of course, there are numerous individuals who do not function as intellectuals, and while they may try to promote survival, they often fail. Finally, by considering the social interactions in these narratives, it becomes possible to extrapolate strategies for addressing the ideological clashes behind the contemporary “real world” struggles that undergird these fictional representations of the end of the world as we know it.

3. Snowman as Traditional Intellectual in *Oryx and Crake*

Margaret Atwood's 2003 novel *Oryx and Crake* is a dystopian narrative that begins shortly after the Event—a large-scale, viral outbreak—kills nearly all humans on earth. Snowman, as the protagonist refers to himself, struggles throughout the novel not to starve to death as his food supplies dwindle and to avoid being targeted by predatory animals against which he has few weapons. Through a series of flashbacks given exclusively from Snowman's perspective, the reader learns that Snowman, formerly Jimmy, has survived due to his close relationship with Crake, whose experiments in bioengineering have produced both the plague that has destroyed humanity and a group of survivors, the "Children of Crake", a genetically altered species based on the DNA of Jimmy's friend Oryx. Though barely able to survive himself, Snowman, as the result of an earlier promise to Crake, watches over and directs the "Crakers." Crake envisioned that these humanoids would be void of all the negative attributes of humanity and entreats Snowman to watch over the Crakers and ensure they do not develop a culture involving art and religion. As the Crakers ask more and more questions, Snowman's effort to make sense of the past and present for his non-literate charges forces him to grapple with his own understanding of events. This process demands that he think critically about his own humanity as well as that of the Crakers.

Without any of the values and practices of a human culture, the Crakers seem to be in a liminal area—not quite human, but not quite animal—and this is something that Snowman seems to recognize, as he himself questions their humanity. While many scholars have attempted to analyze and explain the Crakers' humanity, or lack thereof, they have failed to notice not only Snowman's role as an inhibitor to the Crakers' social development but also his own simultaneous dehumanization. Through Snowman's interactions with the newly created humanoids, he takes

on the role of a traditional intellectual, preferring to view himself as an emissary of a superior past culture and effectively isolating himself from the culture of the Crakers. Believing that his status as a “real” human being lends him an authority derived from his knowledge of now-vanished cultural practices and ideological norms, Snowman cannot function as the organic intellectual the Crakers need. Ironically, this also means that it is Snowman who forfeits his humanity through his inability to interact freely with the community of the Crakers, who, human or not, represent the only society available to him at the novel’s outset.

While Snowman is separated from his past by traumatic and cataclysmic events that include his witnessing first the murder of his lover, Oryx, and “suicide” of his best friend, Crake, then the wholesale destruction of the human race, he clings to the ideas presented to him before these events occur. To him, the past holds the same amount of meaning as, if not more than, his present. In “‘Time to Go’: The Post-Apocalyptic and The Post-Traumatic in Margaret Atwood’s *Oryx and Crake*,” Katherine Snyder points to the significance of the temporality between Snowman’s past and his present. “The future moment activates the meaning of the past moment, but that past moment also endows the future moment with meaning; the past determines the future, but the future also retrodetermines, or gives new meaning to, the past” (Snyder 472). Snowman’s only connection with his past, besides his interactions with the Crakers and the objects he finds throughout the post-apocalyptic world, are his memories of what has been destroyed amid Crake’s destructive “cure” for the human race. By letting himself be guided by his memories, Snowman is trying to reconnect with all of his friends and loved ones who have since died, establishing his inability to break with a past that is gone for good. At the same time, however, Snowman—in his pre-apocalyptic persona of Jimmy—attempts to maintain a skeptical stance toward the dominant class to which he and Crake belonged. In doing so, Snowman is

coping with the trauma of Crake's apocalypse in his own way while also taking on the role of a traditional intellectual vis-à-vis the Crakers.

The way that Snowman interacts with the Crakers and inhibits their human-like culture from developing makes him a perfect example of a Gramscian traditional intellectual. Snowman, in this sense, is trying to mold the Crakers into the vision that Crake had when creating them, which is that the Crakers would be void of all that was distasteful, in Crake's opinion, about society. By directing the Crakers to do certain tasks while having them avoid other tasks, Snowman is continuing the discourse that Crake provided for him: the Crakers are beyond what has ruined *Homo sapiens sapiens*. Throughout the novel, Snowman is guided by the ghosts of Crake and Oryx. Snyder points out that voices of Crake and Oryx are present throughout the novel and they are influential in guiding Snowman (477). "*But Jimmy!*" Snowman imagines Oryx saying, "*Why do you give up? You have a job to do! You promised, remember?*" (Atwood 344). In this sense, Snowman is continuing the discourse of the past by replaying it in his own mind, motivated by guilt to recapitulate its tenets. By doing this, Snowman remains a traditional intellectual and deputy of Crake's ideas.

Snowman fits the role of traditional intellectual not only by promoting Crake's idea of the Crakers, but also by allowing himself to be coerced into this role. He sees himself as separated from Crake. He is, however, still enacting Crake's agenda. While Snowman is unlike Crake in a variety of ways, his goal seems to be in line with Crake's vision: keep the Crakers away from what plagued human society. In "Paradise Lost, Paradise Regained," Danette DiMarco explains how Crake manipulates Snowman into taking on the role which will guide the Crakers and keep them on their current path. DiMarco points out that Crake uses Jimmy's love for Oryx, the woman they both pursue, "as a strategy to get Jimmy to act as Crake's pawn" (186). Oryx is a

tool by which Crake forges Snowman into a traditional intellectual. Before being introduced to Oryx, Snowman would have had no attachment to the Crakers, and only afterwards is Oryx able to make him agree to take care of them. Hannes Bergthaller, in “Housebreaking the Human Animal,” argues that Crake and Snowman are similar in some ways, such as in the sense that they both act as humanists in the novel. Yet Bergthaller points out that they take drastically different approaches in trying to guide the new humanoids: Crake is trying to “breed the wildness out of man” (735), while Snowman “casts himself in the role of the shepherd” (734). Their actions, while different, are along the same lines: allow the new race to exist without the negative aspects of human psychology, society, and economics. Even though he struggles to keep the Crakers away from what Crake considered the negative attributes of humanity, Snowman’s position is crucial if the Crakers are to turn out as Crake had hoped.

Even though the Crakers were created for a specific purpose, and they were genetically altered in order to meet a specific set of criteria by their creator, their future is not set by the purposes for which they were created. In “Pigoons, Rakunks and Crakers: Margaret Atwood’s *Oryx and Crake* and Genetically Engineered Animals in a (Latourian) Hybrid World,” Jay Sanderson explains that a common idea in the novel is that the hybrid animals presented often go beyond their intended purposes. “Atwood describes how many of the hybrid creatures do not turn out the way their creators had intended, and how their creators end up losing interest or control (or both) of the hybrids once they are released to the public” (Sanderson 221). The pigoons, once used to grow human organs; the wolvogs, once used to protect institutions against intruders; and the bobkittens, once used to limit the population of rabbits and cats, now roam the deserted landscape in packs, because they have changed their habits in order to survive. It is fair to say that just like the pigoons, wolvogs, and bobkittens, the Crakers will transcend the life that

Crake had in mind while he created them. Snowman's role, then, is simply to ensure they do not evolve.

Locked in an uninformed role, the Crakers, then, should be able to live less complicated life than the humans that preceded them. Cast as "modern primitives," they exist in the kind of atemporal space Norman Mailer dubbed, in his famous essay "The White Negro," the "enormous present." For Mailer, whose subject was the urban African-Americans he considered "hipster" models for white intellectuals, the concept involves the consciousness of an individual who "exists in the present, the enormous present which is without past or future, memory or planned intention" (Mailer 278). The Crakers are placed in this sort of position by Crake and held there by Snowman. Crake essentially builds them into this mindset through genetic manipulation, first by removing all notions of the human race's past, the ideas he tells Snowman have been "edited out" of their thought processes; and second by removing their potential knowledge of death and the future: "'Immortality,' said Crake, 'is a concept. If you take 'mortality' as being, not death, but the foreknowledge of it and the fear of it, then 'immortality' is the absence of such fear...Edit out the fear, and you'll be [immortal]'" (Atwood 303). Crake tells Snowman that the Crakers will not have to live in fear because death is not something of which they will be aware. Snowman, then, ensures that Crake's programming is able to maintain its control over the Crakers' cognitive faculties with regard to time and temporality.

Yet Snowman's ability to lead the Crakers, limited as it is by his vision of himself as a traditional intellectual maintaining past ideological structures, ultimately must falter. One of the first examples of the Crakers stepping out of the shadow of their creator's vision of them occurs when they began questioning their existence. The Crakers' first inquiries into their creation actually occur long before the apocalyptic transition into Snowman's present. Snowman recalls

that the newly-created Crakers questioned their own origins, something that Crake believed had been “edited out” of their thinking. ““Today they asked who made them,”” Snowman remembers Oryx telling Crake (Atwood 311). Later, when Snowman leaves the beach for a few days as he ventures back to what remains of “the Compound,” the Crakers create a replica of Snowman to speak with while he is gone. Although Crake insisted that the Crakers should never create art, they begin to do so in Snowman’s absence. “*Watch out for art*, Crake used to say. *As soon as they start doing art, we’re in trouble*”, Snowman recalls, wondering “who first had the idea of making a reasonable facsimile out of him, of Snowman, out of a jar lid and a mop?” (361). Crake’s imaginary voice, in this instance, reminds Snowman of what the Crakers should not be doing, even as Snowman is unable to stop them from doing it.

Nothing foreordains Snowman’s future as a traditional intellectual. Since, as Marx states, “It is not the consciousness of men that determine their existence, but, on the contrary, their social existence that determines their consciousness” (12), then Snowman’s interaction with the world around him is what guides his own awareness of his actions. Snowman has the opportunity to restart humanity—himself included—in his post-apocalyptic world; yet he clings to the future that Crake envisioned and set in motion. Instead of reacting to Crake’s apocalypse as a fresh start, Snowman sees it as the next stage in his past, and this causes him to view the Crakers differently than himself, thus he does not feel connected to them in a meaningful way: “Last of the *Homo sapiens*—a white illusion of a man, here today, gone tomorrow, so easily shoved over, left to melt in the sun, getting thinner and thinner until he liquefies and trickles away altogether” (Atwood 224). The Crakers, alone, are the future, and in time, Snowman will join the rest of the *Homo sapiens* in death.

Snowman seems to realize that he is somehow failing the Crakers and that once-relevant

notions of leadership as the province of traditional intellectuals are no longer useful. At one point, he imagines a voice talking to him about overcoming obstacles when they are presented:

“A great man must rise to meet the challenges in his life... This is surely the lesson taught us by history. The higher the hurdle the greater the jump. Having to face a crisis causes you to grow as a person” (Atwood 237) Snowman’s loss of humanity becomes clear in his response to this inspirational sounding advice. “‘I haven’t grown as a person, you cretin,’ Snowman shouts. ‘Look at me! I’ve shrunk!’” (237). Without a community where he is accepted as an equal member, Snowman’s own humanity dissolves. But by the novel’s end, Snowman is given an opportunity to decide for himself which “human” role he intends to facilitate in order to deal with the new group of survivors he encounters.

What can we learn from Snowman’s interactions with the Crakers, and in what ways are these fictional interactions relevant in today’s society? Contemporary readers see for themselves, what Snyder calls, the “devastating conclusions,” specifically the loss of humanity, shown to us in works such as *Oryx and Crake*. And Snyder identifies as a main theme of speculative fiction: “the difference between past and present” (471), which in *Oryx and Crake* is “the difference between a human future and no future at all” (471). This difference is present in Snowman’s interactions with the Crakers, but this is also an issue steadily growing within the social anxiety of the present. Through the conservative notions of the traditional intellectuals, humanity becomes lost. But by having social groups work together, with the correct form of leadership, humanity will reemerge and thrive.

4. The Only Hope for *Death Troopers*: The Organic Intellectual

A common element among contemporary apocalyptic narrative is placing a zombie threat in the mix of the apocalyptic struggle. While usually depicted on earth, one example places the zombie threat in a galaxy far, far away: *Star Wars: Death Troopers*, Joe Schreiber's 2009 novel. Like most zombie stories, the events shown to the audience in *Death Troopers* have some resonance in today's society, and these events can show how we are willing—or unwilling—to deal with our own issues. In his article "Locating Zombies in the Sociology of Popular Culture" Todd K. Platts explains that "zombie narratives commonly present apocalyptic parables of societies in the state of collapse (or have already collapsed) wherein a handful of survivors receive claustrophobic refuge from the undead horde" (547). *Death Troopers* contributes to the genre in much the same way: six individuals survive the initial zombie outbreak, which disintegrates the familiar hierarchy established in the *Star Wars* films—a hierarchy set in place and dominated by the Galactic Empire. Out of the six initial survivors introduced, only four will survive in the end. While *Star Wars* zombies seems even more unrealistic than earthly zombies, Platts argues, despite the lack of consensus as to what the pop culture zombie actually is, "What nearly all understandings and depictions of popular culture zombies have in common is a flexible creature designed to evoke our...concerns about manmade and natural disasters, conflicts and wars, and crime and violence" (550). The social problems alluded to through zombie narratives are not just about the events that we fear, the disasters or wars hinted at by Platts, but also about *how* those left—the survivors of these works—can communicate, organize, unite, and work together in order to survive in the end.

Even more terrifying than the zombies that constantly roam in search of uninfected flesh in narratives like *Death Troopers*, is the struggle faced by survivors to deal with, well, other

survivors. Gerry Canavan discusses in his article “‘We *Are* The Walking Dead’: Race, Time, and Survival in Zombie Narrative” the importance (or lack thereof) among survivors to unite under the pretense that they share the same struggles, conditions, and needs as each other. He states that “the solidarity among survivors in zombie narrative is always much more unstable than in the typical alien invasion story... [as] allegiances fragment into familial bands and patriarchal tribes, then fragment even further from there” (443). This trend is also present in *Death Troopers*. Those that live through the initial outbreak are not the only survivors. The interaction between the two groups of survivors shows not only different ideologies surrounding survival, but also different means in which survival becomes possible.

As mentioned, the social structure present in *Death Troopers* should be familiar to any fan of *Star Wars*. The novel is set approximately one year before the first *Star Wars* film takes place, so the Galactic Empire would have been in control for about twenty years. The established hierarchy presented in the films is the basis for the novel’s introduction, and the novel’s setting itself, while switching from one Imperial ship to another, can be considered, simply, the Empire. All of the characters who hold importance in the first half of the novel are introduced on the Imperial prison barge *Purge*, which is itself both the property of the Empire and one of the Empire’s apparatuses in which it is able to maintain ideological control. It is onboard *Purge* that the Imperial characters Jareth Sartoris and Dr. Zahara Cody are introduced with a variety of the prison population, including the brothers Kale and Trig Longo and the only two familiar faces of the *Star Wars* films: Han Solo and Chewbacca. Sartoris, under the orders of the Empire, is tasked with escorting the prison barge and its living cargo to the penal moon Gradient Seven.

Assuming that the Empire's policies are consistent across the *Star Wars* "Legends"³, then the prisoners onboard *Purge* have nothing but manual labor to look forward to once they reach the penal moon. Set around the same time, Sean Williams's *The Force Unleashed* shows that the Empire was using prisoners for manual labor to construct the first Death Star (319). By incorporating labor as a form of punishment, the Empire is able to kill two birds with one stone. First, they are punishing those who, for whatever reason, have been deemed criminals by the Empire; and second, the Empire is able to produce and expand its own institutions and apparatuses without a skilled labor force. Considering that the Empire has created within its prison population a potential for labor that equates to a value, it is surprising and shocking when early in the novel it is apparent that Sartoris murdered one of the Empire's prisoners. The individual Sartoris has murdered is Von Longo (father of Kale and Trig).

This incident, on Sartoris' part, not only undermines the Empire's productivity but also lands Sartoris in disciplinary trouble with his superior, Warden Kloth. The warden has the perfect opportunity to punish Sartoris when the *Purge*'s thrusters appear to break down, leaving the prison barge and all of its occupants stranded in deep space. After *Purge*'s engines stall, Kloth orders Sartoris, along with other Imperial personnel, to board an apparently abandoned Star Destroyer floating nearby to scavenge parts. The Warden implies that this task is Sartoris's punishment for the Longo murder: "You may consider this mission an opportunity to redeem yourself," he tells Sartoris (Schreiber 31). The Empire is known for systematically killing civilians for its own twisted ends (think of all the inhabitants killed in the original *Star Wars* when the Death Star destroys Alderaan), so it is not the mere fact that Sartoris has murdered Von

³ *Star Wars* "Legends" were previously referred to as the "Expanded Universe," which consisted of non-film contributions to the *Star Wars* franchise, including video games, novels, graphic novels, comic books, etc. After Disney's acquisition of *Star Wars* in 2012, the "Expanded Universe" was renamed the *Star Wars* "Legends."

Longo that has caused the warden's disapproval. Why, then, is Sartoris in the wrong for flexing the oh-so-familiar Imperial muscle, especially when others within the Empire induce fear through similar acts, including murder, just like Sartoris? The difference for Sartoris is simple: he is a low-class worker within the Imperial hierarchy. While he is part of the whole, he is only one of millions, if not billions, who work day in and day out for the galaxy-wide Empire. He seems to have forgotten that he plays a minor role, and for a brief moment attempts to decide what is in the best interest of the Empire. By doing so, he has essentially "stepped out of place." And, by having Sartoris board the Star Destroyer with mechanics, guards, and stormtroopers, Kloth is "putting him back in his place." It is a reminder for Sartoris that he is a worker. The Empire may have invested some authority in him through his position, but he does not hold authority of his own. This task, requested by the warden, cements Sartoris' place within the working class, at least while the current hierarchy remains.

The mission to scavenge for parts from the nearby, abandoned Star Destroyer is familiar to situations in other zombie narratives or, more simply, horror films, as it creates an ironic situation where the audience can foresee how the events will quickly take a turn for the worse. And, as the audience probably predicted, the mission to board the Star Destroyer leads to the death of nearly all aboard *Purge*. Sartoris and the other workers board the Star Destroyer, find the necessary pieces to fix *Purge*'s engines, and return to the prison barge; they also bring back a highly-infectious virus. Most of the boarding party becomes violently ill, which is followed by a majority of *Purge*'s population—Imperial staff and prisoners alike—become ill as well. Sartoris and a few others are the only ones that are naturally immune to whatever illness is spreading through the barge. Sartoris attempts to abandon ship, when he arrives at the escape pod, he finds two of uninfected prisoners inside—both are adolescents. "Imperial corrections had a saying:

There are no children here. They were inmates, convicts, nothing less than enemies of the Empire” (Schreiber 179). Without remorse, Sartoris kicks the two young prisoners out at gunpoint, insisting he will take the pod alone. At this point, he hits the launch button and the escape pod is jettisoned. That is the last time that the antagonist Sartoris shows himself in the novel.

Directly after the escape pod is launched, it is pulled into the docking bay of the abandoned Star Destroyer by a tractor beam, and Sartoris is knocked out by the impact of the crash. During the time that he is unconscious, the entire social structure is dissolved. The social dynamics shift rather dramatically due to the extremely high infection rate of the virus. This event induces the kind of fear of “societies in the state of collapse” that Platts explained as one of the only commonalities among zombie narratives (550). Despite the fact that Sartoris fled the barge before witnessing the reanimation of the familiar corpses of his co-workers and the Empire’s inmates, the once rigid Imperial hierarchy onboard *Purge* has all but disappeared. Of the six who remain alive, two were once Imperials and four were once prisoners. Thus two groups are born, one represented as dead and virus-controlled, and the other as living and autonomous. And, while the dead group would be guided by the ideology of consumption, which is projected through the virus, the living group will have an ideology of its own—an ideology that clashes with that of the dead. The living ideology would benefit those left alive and willing to fight to stay alive by promoting life, encouraging communal sacrifice through altruistic actions, and creating a cohesive identity that directly contrasts the dead group. This is important in explaining the transformation of Sartoris from selfish individual into organic intellectual, as he will fight for unity and uniformity among his group. After the shift in social dynamics, and only

upon this realization, Sartoris takes the form of an organic intellectual. This is clear by Sartoris' interactions with characters before and after he becomes aware of the zombies.

Scholars agree that there are connections between zombification and our society's desire to consume. There is not a consensus, however, on the fate of characters in zombie narratives that remain uninfected. Webb and Byrnard state: "What is remarkable about so many zombie [narratives] is that the survivors of the plague/accident/alien invasion caused by the infection do so little to distinguish themselves from the zombies; it's [very] much a case of *as you are, so too am I*" (86). They go on to explain that many times characters, rather than contracting the infection, act similarly to the zombies; they act like zombies in the rage they acquire. I would argue that this idea is partially reflected in *Death Troopers*. Some survivors act similarly to zombies and some do not. Sartoris encounters a group of survivors who have gone through self-zombification.

Upon leaving his wrecked escape pod, Sartoris sees a horde of zombies in the bay of the Star Destroyer. This sight leads him to hide for safety in an Imperial shuttle. Inside, and to his surprise, he finds a group of Imperial soldiers—the first truly living things he has seen since leaving *Purge*. Commander Gorrister, the leader of the survivors of the Star Destroyer's crew, tells Sartoris how exactly his men lasted for ten weeks in the small transport shuttle. Believing themselves trapped inside the shuttle, they have slowly been killing and eating their own. Originally there were thirty survivors, and, in an attempt to survive, they turned cannibalistic. Thus, as the weeks slipped away, that number shrunk to six due to their need for food. Gorrister tries to justify his actions to Sartoris: "It was nothing more than a simple matter of survival. We were *starving*, you see" (Schreiber 212). So, even while they were never infected by the virus, the survivors still imitate the zombies' consumption of flesh, but they do it for biological

reasons. None of *Purge*'s survivors (Trig, Zahara, Han, Chewbacca, or Sartoris), however, resort to this kind of self-zombification.

Sartoris's ideology instantly clashes with the Imperials, and, now in an attempt to salvage their position within the living group, he reminds the Imperials: "We're not like them" (Schreiber 212). He assumes his new role as organic intellectual by distinguishing these men from the zombies in an attempt to preserve his group, reinforcing the idea that the living should act like the living, not like the dead. The Imperials, led by Gorrister, insist on cannibalism rather than preservation. Due to their fear of the zombies, they choose to mimic the actions of the dead, instead of opposing them, which would mean confronting their fear. While still living, they are under a mirror image of the virus' ideology, choosing to consume their own rather than fight for their overall survival. And as soon as Sartoris realizes that these men intend to eat him too, thus rejecting homogeneity and preservation, he reacts by quickly tossing the men out of the shuttle, one by one. The last Imperial, called only White, clings to the side of the shuttle and begs for his life. Fear has apparently re-humanized the Imperial, because Sartoris responds by assisting him and bringing him back into the shuttle, thus into the ideology of preservation. Sartoris then verbally reinforces his previous notion that they are not like the zombies and that they need to work to survive.

"—we understand each other, White?"

"Yessir."

"I'm gonna make a break for it, and I recommend you use that opportunity to get this vessel locked down the best you can" (227).

While Sartoris' actions are not altruistic, they are his first redeeming act in the novel.

After saving the young man, Sartoris leaves him with the shuttle while he attempts to shut off the tractor beam, so they can leave. He rushes out of the shuttle, through the crowd of undead, to the other side. At this point Sartoris realizes he has been bitten by one of the zombies. Likely sensing his impending death, Sartoris continues to evolve and uses his final moments to rescue Trig, Han, and Chewbacca, the only other living characters he is able to come across. Sartoris's mentality has completely changed, so much so that Han is surprised by Sartoris. After picking the trio up with a hover-lifter, Sartoris asks if Han can fly the hover lifter. Han shockingly replies, "You're going to let me[?]" (Schreiber 251). As Han and Chewie are busy engaging zombies, Sartoris turns his attention to the young, former prisoner, Trig, and give him directions to escape: "There's an Imperial shuttle down in the hanger... You understand what I'm telling you?" (252). Sartoris then jumps off the lifter into the horde of zombie below. Not only does he save the three, but he sacrifices himself in order for them to escape. As in the episode with the Imperial in the shuttle, Sartoris' action sets a precedent for the others in his group that the living should help the living. That idea then leads to preservation, which is the function of his survival. Considering his ability to not only form a uniform class of the living, but also aid in his class' preservation (which is accomplished by the end of the novel), Sartoris becomes the unsung hero of the story. His transformation from selfish to selfless is similar to that of many characters in the *Star Wars* universe, and it fits well with the overall idea of redemption associated with the franchise.

5. The Non-functioning Intellectual in *Shaun of the Dead*

Set in the suburbs of London in the early 2000s, *Shaun of the Dead*, the zombie comedy starring Simon Pegg, takes familial zombie tropes and turns them on their side in order to parody the likes of *Night of the Living Dead* and *Dawn of the Dead*—classics within the genre. Additionally, the way in which *Shaun of the Dead* seems to mock the situations and survivors in zombie texts allows for this film to highlight one of the Gramsci's ideas regarding intellectuals. Specifically, this film shows what happens when a non-functioning intellectual is forced into acting as a functioning intellectual. This situation breaks up the idea of Gramsci's non-functioning intellectual into two separate categories: the non-functioning intellectual that follows and the non-functioning intellectual that, through circumstance, attempts to lead a group of apocalyptic survivors. As probably evident from the title, this zombie film's protagonist is Shaun (Simon Pegg). After the opening credits, the black screen cuts to Shaun with a cigarette in hand, finishing a beer, and staring at the camera. Jean-François Baillon and Nicolas Labarre, in their article "Things Are Going to Change: Genre Hybridization in *Shaun of the Dead*," characterize this cut as ways of introducing Shaun "as the visual and narrative center of the film. This elevated status is confirmed throughout the scene by his role as a focalizer." As Shaun takes a swig of his beer, the bartender can be heard behind him exclaiming, "Last orders, please" (*Shaun*). And in short succession, the audience is introduced to Shaun's girlfriend Liz (Kate Ashfield), his best friend Ed (Nick Frost), and Liz's friends Di (Lucy Davis) and David (Dylan Moran). Even before the zombie threat begins to deteriorate London society, Shaun is struggling to get through his daily routine, which consists of working and finding time to spend with his friends, girlfriend, and mother—feats that take more effort for Shaun than they should.

Shaun's pre-apocalyptic role contains no authority, and this makes his post-apocalyptic leadership all the more interesting. It is during, what appears to be, Z-Day that Shaun is placed in a position of authority at his work. Shaun, acting as the manager, tries to organize and direct the other, notably younger, employees. He is unable to keep their attention or their respect, and his attempt at a productive "huddle" quickly falls apart. "Gather around. Now, as well as Mr. Sloan being off today, I'm afraid Ash is feeling a little bit under the weather. So I will be taking charge as the senior staff member, so if you can all just pull together, I know..." (*Shaun*). Shaun is then interrupted by Noel, another employee, as his cellphone begins to ring. Shaun waits patiently while Noel converses on the phone, and as Noel hangs ends the call, Shaun is surprised to see the young employee continue to type information into his phone. When Noel is finally finished, he directs Shaun to "continue."

Shaun is so distracted by his daily routine that by the time the zombie apocalypse hits, he does not have the time to even notice and, in fact, goes about the first day almost completely oblivious to the chaos that has engulfed the city. Ethan Alter explains the protagonist's naivety in his review of the film "Shaun is so distracted he doesn't even notice that his neighborhood has gone to hell overnight" (Alter). Without even noticing the destruction around him, Shaun apathetically attempts to continue his daily activity. Shaun cannot initially comprehend the crumbling of his society. He continually encounters zombies as he goes about his daily routine. But, the zombie apocalypse is the least of Shaun's trouble. He can barely maintain his usual activities and his relationships during the opening scenes of the film. At one point, as Shaun is running errands, he encounters an old friend, Yvonne (Jessica Hynes). She asks Shaun, "How you doing?" (*Shaun*). And his one word reply, "surviving," shows that while he is able to perform his daily duties, he is having difficulty. Additionally, his comment hints at his inability

to function as an intellectual, since it is his predictable activities that he is able to survive, not thrive, doing. As Shaun and Yvonne are talking, the audience must strain to hear them as numerous sirens are blaring as emergency responders are tending to people in the background. Shaun maintains the same answer throughout the film as he runs into Yvonne two more times, and she again asks him, “How you doing?” And the fact that his pre-apocalyptic answer is the same as his apocalyptic answers suggests that he is fairing the same with the zombie threat as he was without it. His circumstances documents how an individual’s lack of intellectual functioning—while still participating intellectually—can drastically affect others.

It is not until one day after the Event that Shaun finally realizes what has happened. He is not worried when Nelson, the clerk of the convenience store Shaun frequents, is not at the front desk to greet him, and Shaun does not notice the blood smears on the cooler glass as he grabs a Diet Coke, but he does slip and nearly fall as he walks through a puddle of blood. It takes a close encounter back at his home for Shaun and Ed to realize what exactly is going on. It all starts when Ed says, “There’s a girl in the garden...in the garden there’s a girl,” which is followed by Shaun and Ed confronting the trespasser and trying to get her attention (*Shaun*). Nothing works until Ed throws a chunk of dirt at the lady, and, as she turns around, Shaun and Ed see for the first time the discolored skin, the cloudy eyes, the open wounds of this garden intruder. “Oh my god,” Shaun begins as if having an epiphany, “She’s so drunk.” The zombie then lunges at Shaun as Ed jokes, “I think she likes you.” After trying to fend off the lady, and after several warnings, Shaun pushes the zombie, who then falls onto an umbrella stand, which removes a portion of her abdomen. The realization that this woman is a zombie comes only after she is able to stand and continue to advance towards Shaun and Ed. After retreating back into their house, Shaun and Ed are given advice from the news broadcaster that “removing the head or destroying the brain” will

stop the zombies. Once informed of this, Shaun and Ed make their way outside and engage with two zombies in their yard. Ed is somewhat successful at throwing a vinyl disk at one of the zombies, so Shaun retrieves his entire collections, and the two of them begin through the disks. While understanding that they need to fight against the zombies, Shaun is still caught up in the meaning of the past, which is evident as he complains to Ed for throwing “an original pressing” of a record. Ed’s response: “For fuck’s sake.” Ed’s quibble, here, suggests he has a more developed conception of the apocalyptic world—a world where vinyl is more useful as a weapon than as a form of media. Regardless, Shaun and Ed’s rendezvous with the two zombies is a trigger that makes them confront an issue that Shaun had jokingly brought up earlier: survival.

To Shaun and Ed, the question of survival becomes a question of action: what do they do, where do they go? Shaun takes this moment as a change for him to gain authority, which he did not have before, both in his life and in his relationships. Shaun tells Ed that they must go and make sure Shaun’s mother is safe, then they will go get Liz. While thinking of where they can wait out the zombies, Shaun asks himself, “Where’s safe? Where’s familiar?” (*Shaun*). He is attempting to take action for those whom he intends to rescue. At this point, Shaun seems to foster the role of leader as he sets out to save his mother and his girlfriend. Additionally, Shaun now has an understanding how the zombies seem to spread, which becomes evident while he is speaking with his mother, Barbara (Penelope Wilton), on the phone. She tells him that his step-father, Phillip (Bill Nighy), had been bitten, and as he puts his palm over the phone’s receiver, Shaun whispers to Ed, “We might have to kill my step-dad.” This comment, while poking fun at the tension between step-children and step-parents, shows that Shaun has established that the bite on Phillip’s arm will turn Phillip into a zombie.

With his apocalyptic understanding becoming more evident, Shaun decides it is the time to act. Ignoring the television broadcaster's instructions to "stay in your homes. Make no attempt to reach loved ones. Avoid all physical contact with the assailants," Shaun and Ed go to pick up Shaun's mother (*Shaun*). When he gets to her house, Shaun and Ed find that Phillip is quickly succumbing to a bite on his arm, but this does not stop him from chastising his step-son. "Come on, Shaun," Phillip begins, "there comes a time when you've just got to be man." As Phillip is saying this, Shaun is holding a kitchen knife. The camera tracks upward toward Shaun's face and the knife, which Shaun then looks at. For Shaun, being a "man" at this instance has less to do with maturity than it does with killing Phillip, who Shaun believes will turn into a zombie. The screen, however, cuts to Shaun walking out of the front door with his head down, dragging his cricket bat behind in a child-like state. Phillip and Barbara are conversing with each other as they follow Shaun out of the house, and Shaun silently moves his mouth in conjunction with Phillip's dialogue, mimicking and mocking the wounded elder. This shows that while he was given the opportunity to actually take charge and be a "man," as Phillip suggested, Shaun was unable to. As the Shaun, Ed, Barbara, and Phillip make their way to Phillip's car, another zombie manages to take a good chunk out of Phillip's neck. Instead of leaving his soon-to-be-dead step-father, who even tells Shaun, "Don't worry about me. Worry about your mother," Shaun has Phillip join him, his mother, and Ed as they go to rescue Liz in her apartment. This is not a smart move because Shaun knows that Phillip will soon transition from himself to a zombie, which is clear by Shaun's comment to Ed earlier. And by allowing Phillip to join them, Shaun is endangering the lives of all those whom he intends to save.

Despite Phillip's presence, Shaun still wants to find Liz. Once in front of Liz's apartment, Shaun fights his way through a zombie horde, heroically advancing toward the building. Inside

the apartment, he finds Liz with her friends Di and David. Shaun's interactions with the three again demonstrates how he seems to be taking control of the situation: "I've come to take you somewhere safe" (*Shaun*). This would-be romantic gesture is almost instantly ruined by David: "We were perfectly safe before you arrived!" The dialogue suggests the common element of opposing ideologies when dealing with survival in apocalyptic narratives. David, in his sense, is an alternative leader to Liz and Di. While Liz believes Shaun only came to rescue her for the sake of their relationship, Shaun clarifies his intentions and uses this dialogue to imply that Liz's apartment is not the ideal location to be in order to survive, "Look, Liz, this is not about you and me, alright? This is about survival. We need to be somewhere more secure, somewhere on the ground, somewhere we can stay alive." He is, of course, blowing hot air. His only reason for attempting to rescue Liz was in order to get back with her. Liz's apartment, the dangerous residence that is not safe enough for Shaun, was actually the first location that Shaun thought of holing up at when he began making his plan to rescue everyone. What made Shaun change his mind about bunkering down in there? Ed. His friend said he wanted to be somewhere he could smoke cigarettes. Despite Kim Edwards's claims, in her article "Moribundity, Mundanity, and Modernity: *Shaun of the Dead*," that Shaun's "Day-Z rescue and survival plans are inherently sound" (102), it seems that safety and survival actually are not the motives behind Shaun's actions, which backs up the notion that he is not acting in order to survive but, rather, to get back together with Liz.

Even though David initially seemed upset that Shaun came to take Liz somewhere safe, he, Liz, and Di end up following Shaun anyway. Edwards explains that the group "realize[s] their survival is at stake" (102). While their survival is at stake, Shaun's presence perpetuates the dangers around Liz's apartment, and David even points out that zombies had followed Shaun to

the building. The now large group of Shaun, Ed, Barbara, Phillip, Liz, Di, and David all cram into Phillip's car as they head to the Winchester, a local pub frequented by Shaun and Ed. Along the way, Phillip dies and is reanimated as a zombie—just as Shaun assumed when he first heard of the bite on Phillip's arm. This leads the rest of the group to abandon the car, which still has Phillip inside. They make their way towards the Winchester on foot.

After getting off of the zombie-infested road, Shaun leads everyone to the Winchester via a shortcut. As the group makes their way through the gardens of London, they run into another group of survivors. This group is led by Yvonne, Shaun's female friend. She asks Shaun, "How's it going?" (*Shaun*). And he again answers, "Surviving." After the two groups are introduced to each other, Yvonne asks Shaun, "You've got somewhere you're going?"

"Yeah, we're going to the Winchester."

"The pub?"

"Yeah."

"Right, well good luck!"

Yvonne's surprise that Shaun is leading his group to the Winchester is evident first by her facial expression and second by her need to clarify that it was, indeed, the pub that Shaun was heading to. And the fact that she is leading her group in the opposite direction suggests that a keen ability on her part to actual lead, versus Shaun, who is simply reenacting his daily routine at this point.

Finally within sight of the Winchester, the group is demoralized to see a horde of zombie surrounding their would-be safe haven, and David, beginning to challenge Shaun's leadership comments, "I trust Shaun has another genius scheme up his sleeve" (*Shaun*). Shaun, however, does have another idea that allows the group entrance into the pub. First, he has the group imitate zombies so that they can make their way through the crowd of zombies. Next, Shaun gets the

attention of the zombies in the street in front of the Winchester and leads them away; the rest of the group enters the Winchester through a window that David broke with a trashcan. Once inside, they begin arguing about what precautions they need to take in order to secure the Winchester. When David says they need to worry about the broken window, Ed rebuts: “You did that, you twat.” David explains that his action was a response to a lack of action by everyone else, including Shaun. “Somebody had to do something. I don’t know if you noticed back there, but we were in a spot of bother. Somebody had to take control of the situation, and if none of you are prepared to accept that responsibility, then, perhaps, I should.” David is not necessarily trying to be the leader at this point, but he brings up the lack of leadership that caused him to act, which, in turn, takes credit away from Shaun’s role.

A short time later Shaun returns to the Winchester, having led the zombie horde away, and David can no longer contain himself regarding Shaun’s lack of leadership. Edwards describes this idea as Shaun’s “bumbling leadership skills” (102). David decides to leave the Winchester and tells the rest of the group that “We can run. We can defend ourselves” (*Shaun*). Di, on the other, reminds David why he is at the Winchester: “Shaun didn’t ask you to come here. You came for the same reason I did: because you didn’t know what else to do!” It was not the fact that safety would come with following Shaun that brought these others survivors to follow him. It was not knowing what else to do that lead others to follow Shaun. This scene, according to Ballion and Labarre, establishes “the subsidiary status of Dianne and David as mere auxiliaries.” This point also marks Di and David as being expendable.

Following Shaun was not enough to save the majority of them, though. After being at the Winchester for a relatively short amount of time, almost everyone Shaun wanted to save ends up dying. Edwards suggests Shaun “is a mindless and shambolic anti-hero” whose own survival is

based on the notion that he “fits in comfortably with the post-horror surroundings and meandering monsters” (101). Shaun’s lack of leadership, and the recognition that he caused so much death, comes up as Shaun says, “I couldn’t save us. I couldn’t save Di or David. I couldn’t even save my mom. I’m useless” (*Shaun*). Considering the circumstances and the context behind Shaun’s comment, it is, in fact, a realization, not that he is actually useless, but that he is unable to function in the manner he had hoped for, that is as an intellectual. Interestingly enough, as Shaun and Liz make their way out of the Winchester, they are rescued by Yvonne, who is not with a military attachment. These two leadership roles are juxtaposed, and the audience is shown an alternative outcome that would have been available if they had not gone to the Winchester. Although the narrative focuses solely on Shaun’s role as a leader, Yvonne must be given credit not only for surviving the same conditions that most of Shaun’s group died under but also the fact that it was with her assistance that Shaun and Liz were able to survive as well.

The experiences of Shaun demonstrate the issues of non-functioning intellectual leadership and a particular insight into Gramsci’s reasoning as to how certain individuals cannot function in the necessary way to be considered an intellectual. Additionally, Shaun’s leadership role, as well as the rationale for others to follow him, seems reminiscent of a question Obi-wan Kenobi asks a headstrong Han Solo in *Star Wars*: “Who’s more foolish: the fool or the fool who follows it?” Shaun was a fool, and he was followed by fools. This turns out to be disastrous for those that follow Shaun, as they almost all die, but their own foolishness is to blame, not Shaun’s lack of leadership. Unfit as he may have been to lead, the fault lies with those who attempted to survive in Shaun’s shadow.

6. Conclusion

Apocalyptic narratives have not always focused on leadership, but, instead, on a variety of issues, often political or religious. An early example of this apocalyptic narrative is Revelation—the final book of the New Testament of the Bible. This text, while attempting to predict the salvation of those who follow Christ, has yet to come to fruition and was, in actuality, influenced heavily by Roman politics at the time it was written (Diehl 170). Jesus Christ is the Messiah and delivers believers into his Kingdom—a utopia juxtaposed to the world that the early Christians inhabited, and as David Ketterer explains, “there is a necessary correlation between the destruction of the world and the establishment of the New Jerusalem” (7). The destruction of the old world removes the stressors and fears of the past.

Apocalyptic narratives have continued to hold a strong presence in Western culture, and climate change has been an important influence. William Cowper, the eighteenth-century poet, mixed natural phenomenon with social issues. And as Tobias Menely explains, Cowper “Correlat[ed] the apocalyptic weather with urbanization, the slave trade, and imperial warfare” (483). Transitioning from the dangers of technology present in *Frankenstein*, Mary Shelley produced *The Last Man* in the mid nineteenth-century. Siobhan Carroll explains in her article, “Mary Shelley’s Global Atmosphere,” that “*The Last Man*, burdened with the early nineteenth-century’s new-found skepticism regarding both cosmopolitan projects and humanity’s ability to improve nature, transmutes visions of cosmopolitan aerial connection into apocalyptic disaster” (Carroll 8). And in 1910, fear grew among the British as Haley’s Comet was scheduled to pass by earth. As Bruce Heydt points out, “many in the popular press and the public at large reacted to the news [that Haley’s Comet was composed of cyanogen gas] by predicting apocalyptic results

from earth's encounter with the comet" (16). Apocalyptic visions have, to some degree, transitioned away from natural events

By the mid-20th century, authors used this type of text to address various issues that they believed were on the verge of affecting society. The 1950s saw a boom in apocalyptic science fiction (sf) writing focused on atomic and nuclear bombs. Martin Griffiths explains the global changes that have influenced sf throughout the 20th century. "Living under the threat of nuclear destruction," begins Griffiths, "the loss of control over technology leading to widespread pollution and destruction of the ecosphere must surely have had an effect upon humanity and its prevailing ideas and ideologies" (39). Critiques of weapons of mass destruction even transcend the 50s and endured through the early 90s, coinciding with the continual conflict between the Soviet Union and the West, which included the United States and their allies. The only way anyone would have been able to understand the chaos of "Atom-geddon," as Andrew Darlington calls it, was through fiction:

A Cold War "bomb culture" that dominated, shaped and poisoned the lives of all the millions who lived through it. A deep and permanent fear of Einstein's monsters that eventually percolated all levels of society, insinuated itself into all forms of art and infected every aspect of pop culture. (17)

The late 1970s saw the creation of a new, spectacular universe where one regime had the ability to destroy an entire planet in a single blow. This device, called a "technological terror" by Darth Vader, was seen in the first and third *Star Wars* films and was the main weapon of the adequately named *Death Star*. And while George Lucas's *Star Wars* films brought this idea to the big screen, he was simply mimicking what previous authors had done. "Indeed, many sf writers saw the genre as a means of performing a social duty, ...[such as] illuminating the perils

awaiting mankind if he persisted in a certain political, moral or social course” (Griffiths 40).

During the last fifty years of the 20th century, however, those political, moral, and social courses have changed; no longer is nuclear holocaust between the East and the West that conceivable, especially after the fall of the Berlin Wall acted as the first domino that eventually brought down the USSR.

Apocalyptic stories no longer show only out-of-control technology. Rather, they involve landscapes where individuals must work together to survive and leadership is vital to survival—an idea becoming ever more common during the chaotic first years of the 21st century. Dale Knickerbocker admits that apocalyptic narratives became quite popular during the first decade of the 21st century. One thing that Knickerbocker could not know at the time his article, “Apocalypse, Utopia, and Dytopia,” was published in *Extrapolation* in 2010 was just how the popularity of those narratives would grow throughout the second decade of the 21st century; in fact, it appears as though the desire for these stories has yet to climax.

These narratives, while reacting to the current trends in the political arena, highlight an important desire among Anglo-American societies—namely those of the United States and the United Kingdom. Similar to the role of Jesus Christ in the biblical apocalypse, the leaders that enables survival in 21st-century apocalyptic narratives are a catalyst to political changes that—in the bleak and unforgiving terrain—centers on community. This idea, that of a Messiah, a Savior, is not just reserved for religious texts. Many characters in apocalyptic narratives take on the role of savior to their fellow survivors. They promote a set of beliefs that makes the fight for survival worthwhile, and this gives a hint as to what contemporary readers expect from their own leaders. In fact, Jesus Christ would have acted as an organic intellectual to his disciples.

With the continually popular apocalyptic narrative, the fear that is most profound today is the political leadership—a leadership that not only affects Anglo-Americans, but, in all actuality, affects the entire globe. Hofstadter even states that the “paranoid style” is an “international phenomenon” (86). If this fear is a common element among works centering on the destruction of society where survivors need *good* leadership, then we can look at this as a parable to our own society, and the survival of our own society, then, might be dependent on the kind of leaders we have. Anglo-American audiences are concerned about the functionality of those who hold power in their societies, in their government. By looking at novels, films, and short stories, one might conclude that the biggest issues in our society’s speculative future deal solely with human interaction. In a world emerging from the ashes of the establishments and institutions that had guided western society for hundreds—if not thousands—of years, a post-apocalyptic society needs individuals willing and able to guide humanity toward the conditions that they believe will enable survival.

Apocalyptic narratives become useful when questioning the leadership of newly formed social groups because the apocalypse essentially erases the previous social order, allowing for new groups to form. The creation of new groups creates a new range of functions for said groups that transcend the 18th-21st century notions of capitalism and industrialism. It is no longer the case that material production, so much, constitutes the function of social groups. Those experiencing the Event in these narratives have their world turned upside down by removing, for the most part, the functionality and benefits associated with technology, most notably communication, medicine, and transportation. This changes the once-global world into a local, more personal environment. It is without the modern conveniences that have so frequently been taken for granted that a post-apocalyptic society would be constructed. Without the ability to

communicate across the globe, without modes to quickly traverse distant terrains, the post-apocalyptic society is centered on personal, face-to-face interactions. It is through this kind of communication that it becomes clear to survivors how similar, or different, they are to other survivors or groups of survivors. It is the intellectuals—the leaders of any particular social group—that use such communication to aid them on their quest for survival. But, as this thesis finds, not all intellectuals guide others towards preservation; traditional intellectuals, caught up in the previous society's ideology, cannot formulate the needs of a post-apocalyptic society. Organic intellectuals, on the other hand, do realize the changes that have occurred, understand how those changes will affect them and their group, and make appropriate decisions to deal with their own stressors. Non-intellectuals, the bulk of the survivors, while able to promote leadership and help, should not and cannot lead because they do not possess the ability to organize and direct others. Simon, from "Chislehurst Messiah" is a non-functioning intellectual, and this explains why he was unable to lead the youth around him to survival.

Isolated from the other survivors, Simon does not initially care about anyone except for himself. It is made clear that Simon has no intention of helping others. Simon's empathy, or lack thereof, for others is an issue brought up during one of his scavenging excursions. Heading back from one of his neighbors' homes, Simon believes he hears an infant crying. "He thought he heard a baby screaming from the house a block over" (Beukes 75). At first, his recognition of this noise suggests that he cares about the safety of the baby. It is on his radar. But the narrator then explains that Simon creates an excuse in his head why it is not a baby. "But cats fighting make almost exactly the same noise" (75). Despite his initial interest in this noise, Simon justifies himself for not checking on it by declaring that it might be an animal. The narrator wants it to seem as though Simon is just looking out for himself when it is revealed, "And he

wasn't going to risk his life for a bloody cat. It wasn't that he was a man of no conscience" (75). In fact, it sounds like he has no conscience. It would not have been difficult to take a short trip towards the sound, in the process rescuing other supplies, and if he got close enough to the sound to either confirm or disconfirm that there was a baby, then he could safely return to his home. That would allow him to have a clean conscience. Instead, he convinces himself that the noise is a cat, even though he actually have no proof in the matter.

At first, Simon stays to himself because he believes that the he will be rescued. Simon uses all the supplies that he collects to hold himself off until rescuers arrive. The fact that he has to scavenge shows a disruption in the day-to-day processes in which one would ordinarily work in order to earn money that they would then spend on commodities. As he places faith in the ability of the government to assist him, Simon clings to a chance that that lifestyle is not completely gone. "And surely it'd be Only A Matter of Time before the government restored order" (Beukes 74). The narrator here is showing Simon's desires—his hopes. He wants things to go back to the way they were. This means he wants to be led again. He wants somebody to tell him how to act, what to do, and when to do it. This hope, however, is later quashed. "CO19," the imagined government unit that would participate in the rescue, "were never coming" (78). While this realization would lead Simon to reevaluate his situation and survival plan, it does not send Simon out to interact with his fellow survivors. In fact, Simon continues to hide from the youth roaming the streets.

Dashing at the earliest hint that others are around, Simon desperately tries to remain unnoticed. "He quickly reached for the light to turn it off. No point letting them know he was here. He poured the last slug of whisky into his glass and sat waiting in the dark for the damn *yooof* to fuck right off" (78). The youth that Simon is waiting to "fuck right off" saw the light in

Simon's apartment goes off and throws a Molotov cocktail through a window, which sends the apartment up in flames. With the destruction of his home forcing him onto the streets, the lone adult in this post-apocalyptic narrative decides to put his age, his knowledge, and his leadership skills to use by making contact with the children that roam the streets. Fleeing his burning home, Simon "felt a surge of exhilaration. He was alive. He was It. The Guy. Untouchable!" (78). It is at this moment that Simon believes that he will be able to fill a vacuum created by the loss of authority. This is not an idea presupposed by an authority placed on him by the previous social order. Instead, Simon's belief stems from his mind. "There was a Master Plan at work. A Grand Design. Simon had a destiny to fulfill" (78). The all-knowing narrator, already referring to Simon as the Messiah, explains the Simon leaves his old self behind as he sets out to garner followers.

Those whom he attempts to convert, if you will, to follow him are the same "hoodie scum" he avoided at the beginning of the narrative. He has a specific reason to do so now, especially after his epiphany. "The people needed him. He could show them how to put society back together again. He would explain why looting was wrong, why a good university education mattered and why having too many children too young was short-sighted and wholly untenable" (78). He thinks that he will be able to give them all the knowledge they will ever need. But this is not true. Simon can tell them that looting is wrong, yet he has been looting the residences around him; he can tell them to get a university education, yet he cannot educate them in university; he can tell them that having too many children is wrong, yet he has not had any to know for sure. He wants to give them this information, but in the process he is instilling ideas that benefited the previous society. And Simon's fate is sealed in his flip-slop decision making when it comes to those who are essentially his post-apocalyptic peers. Unable to lead because he was neither able

to gain the trust of those whom he wanted to lead nor did he have the right mindset, the actual empathy for those whom he attempted to guide. Simon only wanted to be the Messiah to the youth because he wanted power; he did not want to help them. This is clear by his beliefs before being sent out onto the streets. Simon's individualistic—selfish—attitude, if following Gramsci's thoughts, aided in his loss of humanity. Conversely, Simon's inability to comprehend the needs of those around him led to his death. Thus, Simon is unfit to lead—he is a non-functioning intellectual, he does not function as an intellectual would—and if he were to have been able to take control, it would have ended badly for the youths, and it appears they sensed this.

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